THE COCKEREL AND THE MILL

A Russian Folk Tale

Once upon a time there was an old man and his wife. One day as they were eating peas for supper a pea dropped onto the floor and rolled right down into the

cellar. It lay there for a long or perhaps a short time and suddenly began to grow. It grew and grew right up to the floor.

The old woman saw it and said:

"Chop a hole in the floor, husband dear, to let the plant grow taller and we shall soon be picking peas in our hut."

The old man chopped a hole in the floor and the peaplant grew and grew right up to the roof.

Then the old man chopped a hole in the roof and the peaplant grew and grew right up to the sky.

One day the old man and his wife wanted peas for supper. So the old man took a sack on his back and climbed up the stalk to pick some peapods. He climbed and he climbed right up to the clouds and he saw there a cockerel with a fine golden comb and a gold and blue mill.

Without a moment's thought, the old man took both the mill and the cockerel and slid down the peastalk into the hut.

He slid down and said, "Here's a gift for you, wife: a cockerel with a fine golden comb and a gold and blue mill.

Said the old woman, "Show me the mill. What's it like?"

She picked up the mill and at the very first try, behold, on the table a pancake and pie.

She twisted the handle, a second try, and there again, a pancake and pie.

And each time she tried it, there on the table a pancake and pie, a pancake and pie.

This made the old man and his wife very glad and they lived then in plenty and never were sad.

One day a rich baron drove past their hut and he stopped by their doorway and asked, "Hey, old folks, have you something to eat? I've travelled for miles and am so very hungry."

Said the old woman, "What shall we give you, baron, to eat? How would you like some pancakes and pies?"

She took the mill and gave it a twist. And pancakes and pies showered out, as the baron stood in wonder.

He ate his fill and then said, "Do sell me, old woman, your mill."

Said the woman, "No, baron, I won't. I need it myself."

So the baron waited till the old man and his wife left their hut and then stole their gold and blue mill, jumped into his carriage and sped off.

That evening the old man and his wife looked for the gold and blue mill and found that it had disappeared. They were very sad without their mill so dear and at its loss shed many a tear.

Cried the cockerel with the fine golden comb, "Do not cry. I shall fly to the baron, old man and old woman, and fetch back your mill."

Up he soared in the sky and flew over forest and field, over river and mountain. And he flew right up to the gates of the baron's manor and cried, "Cock-a-doodle-doo! Give us back now, baron, our mill that's gold and blue! Give us back now, baron, our mill that's gold and blue!"

The baron heard and in his fury called his men and said, "Hey, servants, take that cockerel and throw it down the well!"

And so the servants seized the cockerel and flung it down the well.

The cockerel sat in the well and started to drink, saying, "Crop, crop, drink the water! Crop, crop, drink the water!" And he drank the well dry.

He drank the well dry, flew up and out and set off for the baron's manor. He flew onto the balcony and once again cried, "Cock-a-doodle-doo! Give us back now, baron, our mill that's gold and blue! Give us back now, baron, our mill that's gold and blue!"

The baron grew more furious still and told his men to throw the cockerel into the fiery stove.

And so his servants seized the cockerel and flung him far into the flames.

The cockerel sat in the stove and said, "Crop, crop, pour out the water! Crop, crop, pour out the water!" And he doused all the flames in the stove.

Out the cockerel flew and sped straight into the baron's home, where he settled down by the window and once again cried, "Cock-a-doodle-doo! Give us back now, baron, our mill that's gold and blue! Give us back now, baron, our mill that's gold and blue! If you won't give it back then your head I shall peck!"

Then the baron called all of his men.

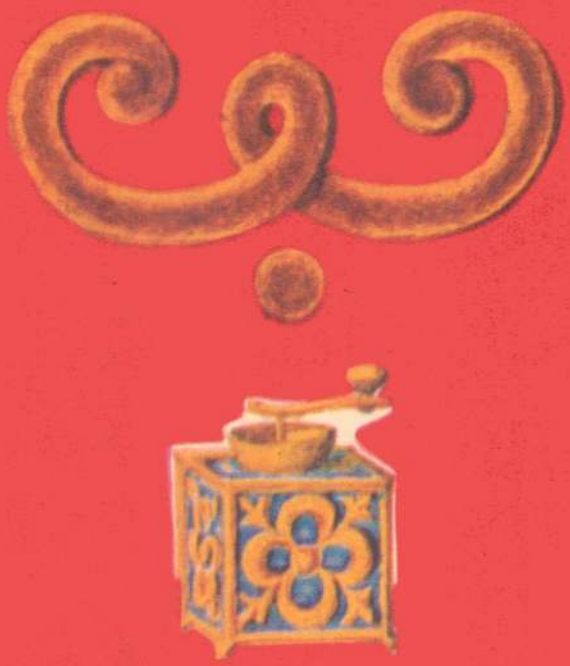
"Hey, servants, seize the cockerel and cut off his head!"

And the men dashed off to sharpen their swords whilst the cockerel gave the baron no peace: he sat down firmly and began peck-pecking at his head.

The baron ran here, the baron ran there, but the cockerel would not stop and pecked at his head right there on the top. Then he whisked up the mill and flew off to the old man and his wife.

He flew into the hut and cried, "Cock-a-doodle-doo! I've brought you back your mill, your mill that's gold and blue!"

The old man and his wife were more glad than they could say. They took their gold and blue mill and, happy to this day, they give pancakes and pies to all who come their way.



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